THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (d) It is a fact that the high cost of computers in relation to the per capita income is a barrier to the spread of Information Technology in rural areas and among the poorer sections of the society. This has also been a cause of concern for the civil society and the issue has been discussed in a number of national and international fora.

The incidence of customs and excise duties on computers and their inputs as well as capital goods used in the manufacture of components has progressively been reduced in order to bring down the prices of computers.

The promotional measures taken by the Government to expand the IT infrastructure and improve computer penetration have helped in extending the reach of Information Technology. Further, the Government has taken special steps to establish Community Information Centres in 487 Blocks of North-Eastern States and Sikkim and 139 Blocks of Jammu and Kashmir to provide connectivity and a range of Government to citizen services to rural population.

The Government has also sponsored projects for development of technology solutions to rural area specific problems, which impede the proliferation of Information Technology.

Decline in the use of post offices

916. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have noted the decline in the use of post offices by the public;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that in cities like Mumbai and Delhi there has been steep decline in the number of postal articles handled in the year 2003-04 by the postal department;

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(d) whether there is a proposal to make better commercial use of the space occupied by post offices; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Post offices have wide range of services. There is continuous growth

in traffic and revenues earned from business of premium products like Speed Post, Business Post, Express Post, Retails Posts. Revenue and traffic figures of the premium products during last three years are mentioned in Statement-I(See below).

Similarly, business both in Postal Life Insurance and Rural Postal Life Insurance have also shown an upward growth trend. Sum assured and premium income in PLI and RPLI during last years are mentioned in Statement-II (*See* below).

There is a general increase in Savings Bank and Saving Certificate business in post offices as reflects from Statement-III (*See* below). However, there is some decline in traditional mail as showing Statement-IV (*See* below).

(b) Statistics of traditional mail articles handled per day in respect of Mumbai and Delhi for the year 2003-04 compared to previous year 2002-03 as given in para (d) of Annexure indicate that there is decline in traditional mail articles handled like ordinary/registered/insured letters/ parcels. However, in premium products like Speed Post, Business Post, Express Parcel Post etc. there is no decline in article handled at Mumbai and Delhi.

(c) Though the traditional mail traffic has shown a downward trend over the last few years, the Department has started premium products and service like Speed Post, Business Post, Express Parcel Post etc. to cater to prevailing market demands.

(d) Space occupied by post offices are utilized for postal purposes and efforts are always made to use the occupied space better.

(e) Does not arise in view of (d) above.

Statement-I

Revenue and traffic figure of the premium products during last three years.

Traffic (in lakhs) and revenue (in crores of Rs.)

Products	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	Traffic	Revenue	Traffic	Revenue	Traffic	Revenue
Speed Post	527.97	196.53	634.07	243.01	826	296.35
Business Post	3672	170.29	4957.81	276.86	6536.33	385.11
Express Parcel Post	43.11	19.31	57.61	26.09	67.27	31.45
Retail Post	—	2.15	—	7.87	—	33.65

Statement-II

Sum assured and premium income in PLI and RPLI during the last three years

Year	PLI		RPLI	
	Sum assured (in Rs. crores)	Premium income (in Rs. crores)	Sum assured (in Rs. crores)	Premium income (in Rs. crores)
2001-02	1710.02	501.85	1696.85	94.71
2002-03	2110.21	591.84	3347.94	171.35
2003-04	2926.00	Under Compilation	6520.68	Under Compilation

Statement-III

Statement showing increase in SB and SC work in post offices during the last three years

Year	Gross funds handled (Deposits & withdrawal)	No. of saving accounts (all types) in millions	Saving certificate deposits (in Rs. million)	Saving certificate withdrawal (in Rs. millions)
2000-01	119106 crore	124.01	329456	171511
2001-02	125506.48 crore	129.11	279724	163472
2002-03	160362.20 crore	137.66	331899	194355

Statement-IV

Statistics of average traditional mail handled per day in respect of Delhi and Mumbai for the year 2002-03 and 2003-04.

Year	Delhi	Mumbai
2002-03	14,56,378	30,40,053
2003-04	12,34,341	26,76,421

Optical Fibre Cable in Tamil Nadu

917. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the progress and the details of laying of Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) in the State of Tamil Nadu; and